Address by Wayne Coy, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
70th Commencement Exercises
College of Music of Cincinnati
Cincinnati, Ohio
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Your chief interest at present is in the occupation you are about to follow. What I shall have to say to you will, I hope, be in line with that interest.

Every important occupation has been made what it is by a guild -- more often than not one whose history stretches back to farthest antiquity. Every such historic guild rose, one may be sure, to meet some deep social necessity. In every generation those necessities were present, demanding the service of its share of the population and providing for the perpetuation of the guild.

The fact that an occupation can teach its far-brought wisdom to the men of each generation makes civilization and progress possible. But this on one condition, that many of the people and some of the best of them shall be able to make that occupation their life business.

The law is not in a country when you have imported Blackstone's Commentaries and the Statutes of Parliament. The law is in a country in the persons of such lawyers as are there.

Religion is not in a country because we have built a church. Religion is in a country in the persons who live a godly life.

Government is not in a country because we have laid out plans for a beautiful capital city. Government is in a country in the persons of "bureaucrats" -- if you wish to call them such -- whose lives are dedicated to serving the public interest. And a word from a "bureaucrat" -- I know of no nobler occupation.

Music is not in a country because we make instruments by which sound can be produced. Music is in a country in the person of those who love it and follow it as a living occupation. It is there in the person of Theodore Thomas, first director of the College of Music of Cincinnati.

Today the College of Music, true to the role of a great educational institution, recognizes the contribution that can be made in training young people for another occupation.

For the first time anywhere in America a college is awarding the degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts in Radio Education. Twelve members of this graduating class have the distinction of being the first in our nation to achieve this recognition from the field of education for the field of broadcasting. The social necessity of this generation has created the demand that some of you be trained for service in the broadcasting field. You are pioneering members of a new guild.

While this evening is one of triumph and elation for you, the members of this class, it is also one of substantial significance for the realm of radio. Broadcasting will be enriched and stimulated by the accretion of freshly-trained recruits. Broadcasting gains new stature by the awarding of this degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts in Radio Education.

It is a particularly happy circumstance that this significant milestone should be reached on the 70th Anniversary of this school. Ever since 1878, this college has been sending its sons and daughters to assume positions of distinguished leadership over the nation.

It is no light matter that you have elected to get a degree in the field of Radio Education -- or in any of the other fields of training offered by the College of Music. In a word, it is to elect for life, for better or worse, some one part of our whole social heritage. It is to choose your comrades and your rivals. It is to choose where you will work. It is to elect your physical and social environment. These influences will not touch you lightly. These influences will fashion your clothes, the texture of your speech, the cunning of your hands and the temper of your will.

But there is, of course, no magic in merely choosing an occupation. If you do nothing to an occupation but choose it, it can do nothing at all for you. If you are an incorrigible lover of holidays, so that the arrival of a working day makes you sick, if every task thrust into your hands grows intolerable, if when you have experienced the drudgery of rehearsal it becomes hateful to you -- that is to have the soul of a tramp. It is to turn your back upon every company of men where anything worthwhile is to be done.

I am a relatively young man. But I have learned a secret about life. It is difficult and it is filled with drudgeries. Your contribution to this life will come only when you have met these difficulties and waded through the drudgeries. And if you don't conquer them you will be frustrated in any field in which you seek accomplishment. The ingredients of success are still blood, and sweat, and tears -- and your will to make something of yourself.

The need for the contribution being made by your Radio Department and by the other departments of the Cincinnati College of Music is sharply highlighted by the recent phenomenal growth of radio broadcasting. While this expansion leads to an increased demand for this specialized training in broadcasting itself, we all realize that it stimulates a demand in all allied fields.

Broadcasting -- both sound broadcasting and television -- has given the modern world almost incalculable opportunities for bringing into every home the works of the greatest composers of all time, and the performances of the most gifted artists of the day.

Broadcasting has made possible the presentation of the finest plays in dramatic literature. It has made it possible for listeners in the most remote and lonely corners of the land to hear the top ranking leaders in every field of endeavor. Broadcasting has many times demonstrated its power to arouse the citizens to a keener awareness of their responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.

Conversely, broadcasting also offers fabulous opportunities for the dissemination of the trivial and the inferior. I suggest that graduates such as you who are coming out of schools these days can reflect credit on your alma maters and on yourselves by dedicating yourselves to raising the standards of public taste.

This problem of achieving more socially useful results is not limited to broadcasting. We have the same problem in the other fields of communication -- in the motion pictures and in the press -- and, of course, in most every other field. But, because of the rapidly growing confusions of today, our media of mass communications have been undergoing increasing scrutiny.

The report of the Commission on Freedom of the Press, headed by Chancellor Robert M. Hutchins of Chicago University, is only one example of this activity. More and more, thoughtful people are becoming concerned with the question of how our mechanisms of mass communication can better fulfill their function in our democratic society.

Let us acknowledge and accept the fact that the radio, the press and the movies play a major role in providing both children and adults with information, education, culture and entertainment. And then let us strive to prepare our children, at least, to live under the conditions of the modern world, by training them to get the most out of these media of communication.

As newspaper readers, they ought to know about the techniques of news-gathering, the theory of the separation of news from editorial comment, standards of fairness in news presentation. They should evaluate the implications of the economic background of the newspaper owners. They should be taught to compare the high quality of the service rendered by the better newspapers to the service in the inferior newspapers.

As movie-goers, they need to be taught to distinguish between the hackneyed the trite, the inane and the productions of honest merit.

In regard to radio, they should know that the radio frequencies are of the public domain and, therefore, part of their heritage; that these frequencies are licensed for limited periods to broadcasters who promise to serve the public interest, convenience and necessity. They should know, furthermore, that while the government regulatory agency -- the Federal Communications Commission -- is required to review a broadcaster's over-all performance during his license period to determine if he has served the public interest, the agency has no powers of censorship. I can assure you that quite a few citizens are not acquainted with these simple fundamentals of our radio licensing system.

They ought to know something about broadcasting production methods. From this, for one thing, they can learn that they need not be too discouraged if they happen to be unmoved by a radio joke while the studio audience goes into hysterics. That is merely the way of studio audiences.

In short, our goal should be educated listening.

Every schoolroom in America should, by now, be equipped with a radio set. It should be freely integrated with the classroom work. It should be employed as a major educational tool. As soon as television becomes available in a community, every schoolroom should be equipped with a television screen -- the electronic blackboard of the future.

Parents need to understand that merely depriving children of the use of the radio in the home is not the way to solve the juvenile listening problem. The way to meet that problem is to guide the children toward suitable programs.

The broadcasters, for their part, can help by providing suitable programs as an incentive to intelligent juvenile listening. And they can cooperate in every sound endeavor with the schools and the parents to meet the radio needs of the community. The cooperation that resulted in the establishment and the support of the Radio Department of the Cincinnati College of Music is a shining demonstration of what can be done in this regard. This new department of the College of Music is a great compliment to Cincinnati's radio broadcasters as well as to this institution.

The broadcasters, the schools and the parents, working together, can make radio an increasingly effective force in American life.

The role of music in American broadcasting makes it highly important for the parents and the schools to give every child the widest possible opportunity to cultivate his natural love of music, to know and to understand good music, to become an intelligent and discriminating listener.

The ranks of the musically under-privileged are still far too large.

Proper training will create a demand for more of the better type of music that radio has to offer, thereby offsetting the present widespread acceptance of the plethora of boogie-woogie, jazz and jive.

While most students of the subject assure us that this cacophony that goes by the name of music does not corrupt the morals, they have no doubt at all that it corrupts the musical taste.

You men and women coming from our colleges of music these days will have an outstanding role to play in elevating the musical taste of the nation.

You graduates can stimulate the movement for better radio not only as professional musicians and as teachers, but as civic leaders.

The increased responsibilities of the radio broadcaster in this day of increased radio facilities and of heightened social, economic and political problems, call for more attention by the radio listener. In a democratic society where the people own the radio channels but entrust them to private individuals for operation, the people have a real responsibility in a common effort to insure maximum benefit from those channels.

It is futile to assume, as some have assumed in the past, that the listeners can discharge this responsibility merely by tuning in the programs that they like and tuning out the ones they don't like. The listener can play a far more effective and intelligent role than that.

For one thing, the people can approach this problem of greater cooperation between broadcaster and listener as they approach so many other problems -- through organized community effort.

The citizens of Cleveland, Ohio, have been notably successful in arousing well-planned discussions of their radio service and in evaluating programs. This has been done through the Greater Cleveland Radio Council. Similar councils might well be established elsewhere.

The leadership exhibited by the Cincinnati College of Music in pioneering in radio education carries forward the splendid traditions of Cincinnati as a progressive musical center. My heartiest congratulations to all those who have contributed their imagination, enthusiasm, energy and money to enable this College to be the first in the nation to confer the BFA degree in Radio Education. I hope that your example will be widely emulated by other colleges and universities over America.

This commencement ceremony tonight is being held against a background of disturbing world events.

The explosive world situation makes us ponder again the paradox of man's capacity to revert to barbarism and to destroy the civilization painfully built up through all the long years from the caveman days. In the last few years, especially, we seemed to have been plagued by this race between constructive and destructive efforts.

In this time of tension, our appreciation of the arts is immeasurably heightened. We value more deeply than we otherwise would the well-being and the happiness that these activities could bring us were we granted the greatest of all boons -- a world without war or fear of war.

We are inevitably forced to face the stern fact that the fight for world security -- for a world governed by democratic principles to enforce peace -- is the first responsibility of all of us.

We must review our efforts since World War II and our efforts today and judge if we have exerted ourselves sufficiently as citizens in a democracy and as citizens of the world to make our will felt in the crucial decisions that spell peace or war. Peace is everybody's job.

Economic maladjustments, injustices, intolerance, unbridled power and irresponsibility lead to recurring wars that mock the bright hopes of peoples everywhere. The cost of past wars and the cost of continuing military preparations, measured in lives and in lowered living standards, are a solemn warning to those who are content to cultivate the arts of peace without fulfilling their full duty as citizens. We must earn as well as enjoy the privileges of a free citizen in a free country.

Those to whom the community has given the special opportunity of a higher education have a special duty to lend their mind and spirit to the betterment of the common welfare.

We look to the youth of our land to fortify and invigorate our democratic way of life.

Those of us who have preceded you, welcome you into life's struggle. You are to bear the burden and the heat of days. You are to be weary with the work that you have chosen, and intolerably weary with the drudgery you have not chosen. You are soon to discover that the hereditary burdens of society will be passed from the preceding generation to you. You are to begin in the freedom of youth. If you have the will to seek accomplishment, you will never grow old in spirit.

Scanned from the National Association of Educational Broadcasters Records
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